

# Why the Washington State Library Matters

- The Washington State Library (WSL) provides crucial backing and technical assistance and grants for the libraries of the state and their many patrons. It is a core service of state government, and much appreciated and used.
- Leveraging modest state appropriations, the WSL uses federal funding for grants, consulting services, training and professional development, affordable databases, and other critical support your local libraries rely upon. State “maintenance of effort” dollars of \$1.8 million leverages \$3.3 million – a wonderful “bang for the buck!”
- Under the banner of “Library 21,” your Washington State Library is creating statewide cutting-edge projects and showing leadership in literacy and education programs to support early-childhood and K-12 instruction. The State Library partners with Microsoft to provide IT Academy online, self-paced, free instruction to equip veterans, students, returning workers, and others in fundamental technology skills that can lead to a family-wage job or job advancement. The State Library’s “Gadget Menagerie” introduces students, elders, and others to the joys of the online world.
- Digital collections are a growing emphasis at WSL, including classics in history, and historical newspapers, maps, and photos. Civics students have access to a searchable database of Washington governors. The Washington Rural Heritage program is an online treasure trove of the people and places of small-town and rural Washington.
- Thousands of family history buffs love the genealogy-related materials available through the State Library’s digital and hard-copy collections.
- The State Library co-sponsors summer reading programs and materials, and supports community and school librarians in serving pre-K through K-12 and higher education. WSL sponsors the Letters About Literature writing contest that inspires thousands of children and youth.
- Community libraries connect and share resources and best practices through the WSL. Through partnership with the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, a mobile app connects citizens to their public, tribal, and academic libraries. Libraries receive help with e-books and downloadable audio books.
- The WSL proudly includes the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library, which serves thousands of patrons and circulates over 350,000 items and downloads over 100,000 items.

- The WSL operates branch libraries in our state prisons and mental hospitals, to support re-entry and recovery. The branches serve over 11,000 inmates and patients, and circulate over 689,000 items annually.
- The Ask-WA program ties together more than 60 libraries to provide 24/7 online reference services.
- The WSL is the official repository for federal documents that many researchers need.

## IN SUMMARY:

Your Washington State Library serves many thousands of patrons across the state. The Central Library in Tumwater relies on state funding, but faces a \$2.4 million revenue shortfall. Public hours have been reduced by half and efficiencies and staff reductions have been made.

- Still at risk are services such as:
  - Reference and information services -- Ask a Librarian, where library staff answer customer questions in person, by phone, via email, and through online chat, and the “help desk” for WA citizens and others who use the Access WA web site ([www.access.wa.gov](http://www.access.wa.gov)) to find information about our state.
  - Interlibrary loans of resources such as state and federal agency publications; Washington newspapers, current and historical; and Washington history and genealogy material.
  - Digitizing and making accessible newspapers, rare books and manuscripts, and state agency publications.
  - Maintaining the comprehensive collection of state and federal publications.
  - Stewardship of the Washington Territorial Library and rare and historical material, such as the original Isaac Stevens collections.
  - Services to sight and physically challenged individuals unable to use standard print materials, and service to prisoners and residents of state hospitals.

Rand Simmons, Ph.D., State Librarian  
 Library Division | Office of the Secretary of State  
 (360) 570-5585 desk phone | (360) 790-1392 cell | (360) 586-7575 fax  
[rand.simmons@sos.wa.gov](mailto:rand.simmons@sos.wa.gov)

**Washington State Library: Empowering 21st Century Washington**